

INDIE POWER MAGAZINE

AUGUST 2013 - ISSUE #2



The “Puzzle” Issue

Just like before, the last month was full of work on the magazine, emails between developers and their agents, reading feedback, and getting the word out about the magazine. As always, your feedback is crucial to the magazine, and has helped shaped the magazine you see today. Another important element is social networking. That means our fans, including you, help out this magazine by sharing links and following us across the internet. Thank you all, I cannot express how much I appreciate it.

Issue 2 is the “Puzzle’s Issue”. Puzzle is a rather broad genre, and it often overlaps with other genres, such as platform puzzlers like **Braid** and **Limbo**, or shooter puzzles like **Portal** and . Sadly, this issue doesn’t really have any puzzle elements to it. Our tutorial was scrapped, and not enough people participated in the poll to allow for us to do post that in the magazine. We’ll most likely be doing another puzzle themed issue in the near future so all you puzzle lovers can get your fair dosage of puzzle content from us.

Next month’s theme is strategy, and we aim on following the theme closely - we already have two articles planned, and are going to plan a couple more this upcoming week during some brainstorming sessions.

Once again, I’d like to thank everyone for taking their time to read through Indie Power Magazine, as the team puts a lot of work into it, and hope to find fans who enjoy what we do.



BRET HUDSON

EDITOR/LEAD WRITER

Bret@IndiePowerMag.com

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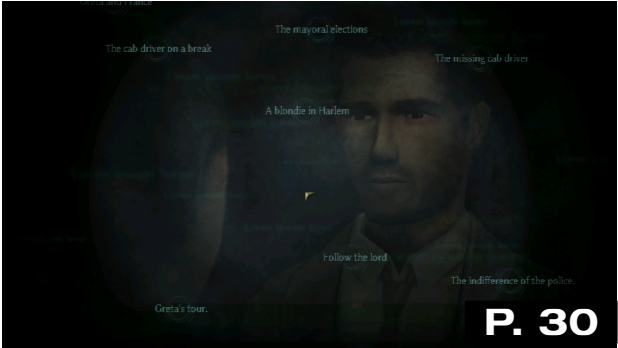
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ABOUT INDIE POWER MAG

First and foremost: if you aren't already, we highly recommend enabling 2 page mode for your PDF reader, with cover mode on. This magazine was designed to be viewed as if it were an actual printed magazine. Adobe Reader is easy to set up:

1. Enable *View->Page Display->Two Page View*
2. Also enable *View->Page Display->Show Cover Page During Two-Up*

We're only covering the way to do that for the most common PDF reader, however, if you use another PDF reader, Google search should be able to help you find out if the reader has two-page capabilities.

How was making this issue?

It seems designing and putting the magazine always gets really stressful towards the end, but hey, you're looking at it, right? That means we finished it without rolling over and dying. This issue was a blast to make, and there were tons of amazing games to review, making the experience all the smoother. I've also been experimenting with InDesign, finding out about some interest effects and shortcuts to allow me to make the magazine faster and look better.

Still going solo?

Nope! Britny's joined the team officially, and there's a couple of potential writers and guest writers working on content for the next issue. We could still use more help, as the more we get, the better the magazine will turn out!

What are you planning on adding/changing?

We need to find a better way to do the monthly poll; currently we're hardly getting any submissions. Seems like many people don't want to, or they just never get around to it. Either way, we need to find a better way to get the poll out and taken.

STAFF AND STUFF



BRITNY MUSSON

WRITER

Britny@IndiePowerMag.com



THIS COULD BE YOU!*

WRITER

You@IndiePowerMag.com

FOLLOW US ON



**Looking like Bret Hudson is not guaranteed*

THE LAST MONTH

in INDIE GAMING



Game Jolt creator CROS has quit his day job and gone indie. Why is this of importance? Game Jolt's creator is well known for creating the fantastic site, but also known for taking ages to push out new updates and features (sometimes taking more than a year). With the extra time, he aims to devote himself to the site to help make it even greater than it already is. Inside the email is more information about how he got here, the history of Game Jolt, and what's going to happen in the near future. If you didn't get an email, don't fret it, there's an online copy available on **Game Jolt**.



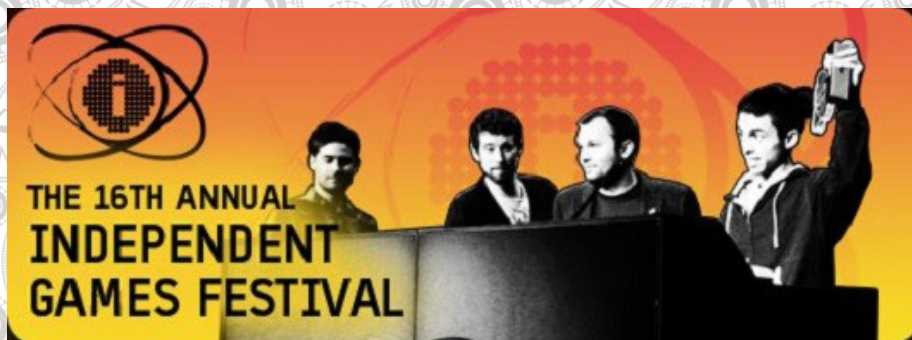
The long awaited update for Unity, 4.2, is available for download today! While we could talk in depth about all the new features/changes, we're just going to provide a nice little list of what's new:

- Windows Phone 8, Windows Store and Blackberry 10 support
- OpenGL ES 3.0 Android support
- GPU Skinning (Pro only)
- Updated/optimized Image Effects
- Stencil buffer access (Pro only)
- Static & dynamic batching for shadow casters & shadow collector pass
- Shuriken Collision Event Callback Scripting Interface
- Integrated version control support for Perforce
- Platform switching, player building and asset importing can now be cancelled
- Deferred Lighting is now enabled on Android and iOS
- And tons more!

Read more about the latest update on the **Unity Blog**.



Shortly following its announcement at E3 this year, Fez II has been cancelled by Phil Fish due to the amount of harassment he receives from the online community. While he said he can take it in Indie Game: The Movie, time has told that he can't take it, and he doesn't want anything to do with games anymore, cancelling the newly created Fez II project. It's a shame that we might not ever see the game, but even more that Phil quit his passion due to the voice of the internet. Cliffy B, Gears of War designer, tried to reach out to Phil to get him to return. Nothing has yet been heard from Fish.



Indie developers are now able to send in submissions for the 16th annual Independent Games Festival. October 19th is the deadline for this year's IGF signups, with entries for the student showcase being due October 31st. The festival boasts approximately \$60,000 in prizes, awarding Excellence in Visual Art, Audio, Design, and Narrative Awards. Finalists will be announced in January 2014, and will be showcased at the festival taking place this year at the Moscone Convention Center in San Francisco.



7DFPS 2013 happened this past week, with a few dozen games being developed over the course of the week, creating unique experiences with the First Person Shooter genre. To find out more, check out www.7dfps.com.

What other jams happened this month, you may ask? Here's some of our favorites:

- GMC Jam #11
- Blah jam



Ludum Dare 27 is coming up the weekend after this issue releases! Super exciting news. We'll be covering the competition and doing reviews on the top couple of games in the October edition of Indie Power Magazine. Over 3,000 themes have been submitted for the upcoming jam, and hopefully they'll be able to cut down the number to a feasible amount for theme voting.

A Lesson for Indie Game Developers

Do you do it on the table or online? For the gaming industry, the world is split quite definitively into physical games vs video games. This disconnect seems unnecessary, and maybe even detrimental to the design of games. The world of gaming has room for all styles and structures but, as the indie game devs have begun to shift from being a mere blip on the radar to a major industry contender, an unfortunate number of them have chosen to mimic the failings of the AAA studios. They need to be aware that they don't have to be a peacock. The idea of "less is more" should be heeded for these smaller companies. Let the work and the playtesting speak for itself. Focusing on making everything as bright and as shiny as possible can easily lead to the gameplay becoming an afterthought.

When was the last time you wanted Solitaire to have more rules or flash?

As the indie game makes its way into

the spotlight, they soon realize that the spotlight is bright and often you can lose your way. Groups need to keep to a tighter scope during development. This balancing act requires you to either be stubborn in your broad models or reduce them down to the bare essentials. Some games, like World of Warcraft, are so multifarious and constantly shifting that they can be hard to

get into. Between the lore, the skill trees, the battle components, the pets, the plethora of races and classes, and the seemingly lack of Point B once you leave the starting zone, it's a wonder any player has the stamina to make it past level 40. Games don't need to be overcomplicated to be successful. Creations like League of Legends, discovered this harmony by allowing the outcome of the matches to be decided by who is chosen and how well that character can be played. Choices are even more limited based on how quickly a character is picked and how reliable your lane partners are. The lore is simplistic and to the point, the character back story is focused on abilities rather than quirks, and the setting is held firmly within a varied but identical

Many AAA studio titles are backtracking by adding multi-player options and online play but in doing so, their carefully crafted world can fall victim to too many variables and not enough play."

style. It isn't possible to singularly rely on the characters' tech and powers when the victories come from collaboration with other teammates against bots or players.

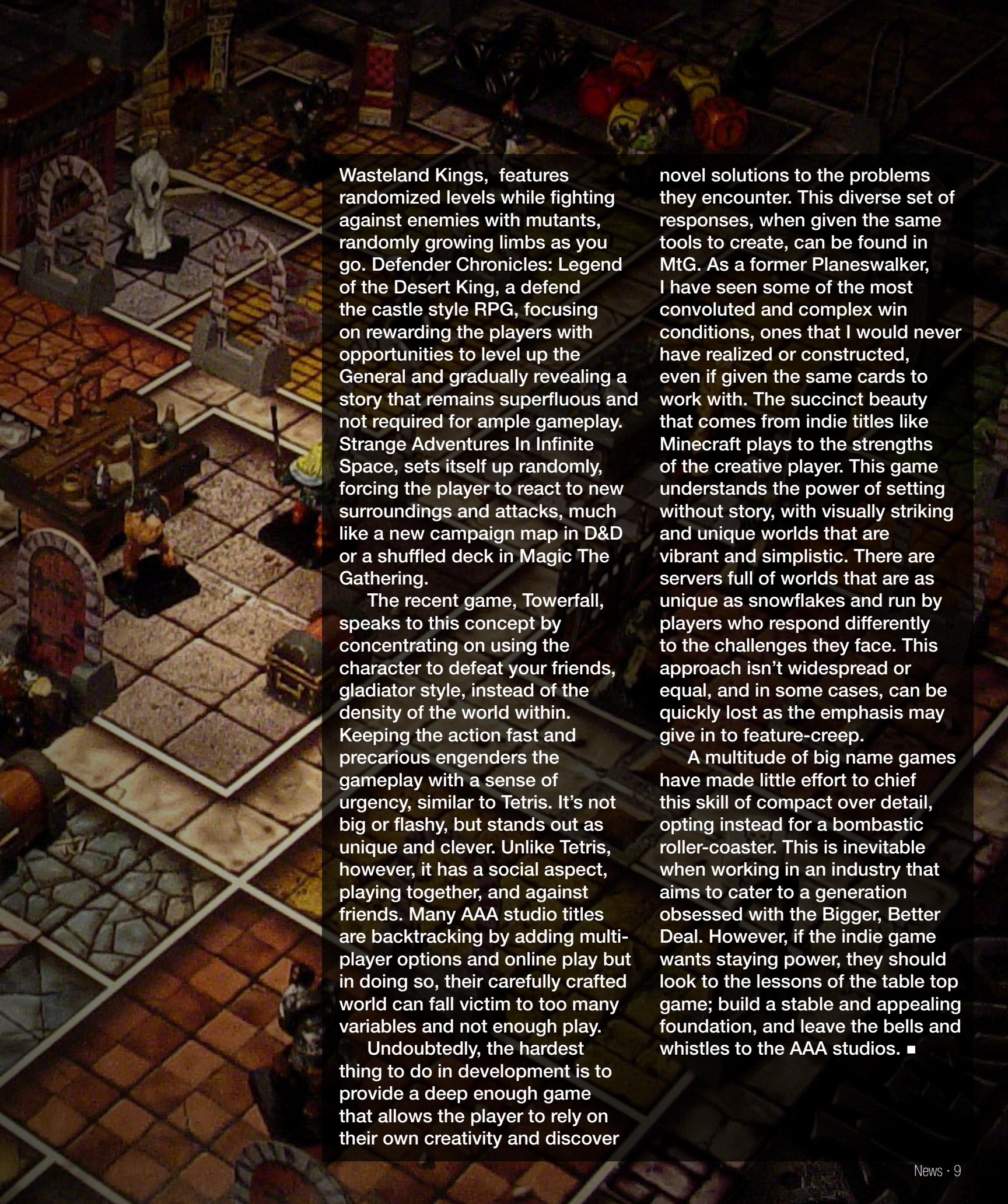
Dominion, like Settlers of Catan, relies on putting the pressure on the player throughout the game by forcing players to reform their strategy ad hoc with decks that only one

player has access to. Beyond simplicity, indie developers should look at how this level of specialized play and the concept of limited randomness is used in campaigns in Dungeons and Dragons. In D&D, you are only as good as the parts or fellow players, which vary from game to game. In the physical world, the mechanics of foundation over flash are identical, but the details within vary enough to allow for no game to be played the same way each time. There is an emotional investment that comes from an unpredictable nature of the "luck of draw" in a card game like Fluxx, a life-or-death surge of adrenaline in a roll of the die, or ending up one turn behind whomever grabs the wood pile in Agricola. The joke that friendships can be ended

over a simple game of Monopoly, where victory is only given at the demise and bankruptcy of the other participants, has roots in the emotional

truth of the player response. These games prey less on the systematic nature of most video games, which can be learned and memorized, by realizing that the player has to choose, think through their moves, and respond to unforeseen decisions made by other players.

The concept of the "roguelike" videogame style is almost exclusively found in indie titles.



Wasteland Kings, features randomized levels while fighting against enemies with mutants, randomly growing limbs as you go. Defender Chronicles: Legend of the Desert King, a defend the castle style RPG, focusing on rewarding the players with opportunities to level up the General and gradually revealing a story that remains superfluous and not required for ample gameplay. Strange Adventures In Infinite Space, sets itself up randomly, forcing the player to react to new surroundings and attacks, much like a new campaign map in D&D or a shuffled deck in Magic The Gathering.

The recent game, Towerfall, speaks to this concept by concentrating on using the character to defeat your friends, gladiator style, instead of the density of the world within. Keeping the action fast and precarious engenders the gameplay with a sense of urgency, similar to Tetris. It's not big or flashy, but stands out as unique and clever. Unlike Tetris, however, it has a social aspect, playing together, and against friends. Many AAA studio titles are backtracking by adding multi-player options and online play but in doing so, their carefully crafted world can fall victim to too many variables and not enough play.

Undoubtedly, the hardest thing to do in development is to provide a deep enough game that allows the player to rely on their own creativity and discover

novel solutions to the problems they encounter. This diverse set of responses, when given the same tools to create, can be found in MtG. As a former Planeswalker, I have seen some of the most convoluted and complex win conditions, ones that I would never have realized or constructed, even if given the same cards to work with. The succinct beauty that comes from indie titles like Minecraft plays to the strengths of the creative player. This game understands the power of setting without story, with visually striking and unique worlds that are vibrant and simplistic. There are servers full of worlds that are as unique as snowflakes and run by players who respond differently to the challenges they face. This approach isn't widespread or equal, and in some cases, can be quickly lost as the emphasis may give in to feature-creep.

A multitude of big name games have made little effort to chief this skill of compact over detail, opting instead for a bombastic roller-coaster. This is inevitable when working in an industry that aims to cater to a generation obsessed with the Bigger, Better Deal. However, if the indie game wants staying power, they should look to the lessons of the table top game; build a stable and appealing foundation, and leave the bells and whistles to the AAA studios. ■



INTERVIEW WITH CHRIS FIGUEROA

INDIE GAME DEV

Bret: With us today we have Chris Figueroa. He is an indie game developer from Minneapolis, Minnesota, which is actually really close to me. It's actually only about an hour away (if you speed). By Canyon Falls, if you know where that is?

Chris: Yes I do.

He also works at a place called the Nerdery. Would you like to tell us a little more about your job there?

Chris: Yeah so that's kind of changed recently. I mean, I still work at the Nerdery but I was a quality assurance engineer and just on Friday I passed off all my quality assurance work and they have me in a mentorship working to be a JavaScript dev. It's kind of interesting. I didn't expect to go down that path at all and it all just kind of happened. So that's really cool. The Nerdery is a software development company and we make just about anything you can think of.

JavaScript is a bit different from game development.

Chris: Yeah, they want me to kind of be a JavaScript canvas dev so that I can do HTML5 games.

Yeah, I've worked with HTML5 a bit.

It's pretty good, but there are some downsides to it obviously since it's new.

Chris: That's what I'll be doing, from my game development background I know C# so it'll be a weird transition for me. The Nerdery is kind of cool if anyone is looking for a software development job.

That means come up to Minnesota!

Chris: Yeah pretty much, I mean we have offices everywhere, too. The Nerdery is pretty awesome I really cannot complain too much. We're called the Nerdery.

So you're also an indie game developer? Is that sort of a part time thing or whenever you can?

Chris: I worked at Activision before I worked at the Nerdery and I just saw terrible things and terrible games go through there. So I ended up doing my own thing. I did that Kickstarter, then I took a different path through the Nerdery and just kept developing indie games pretty much. It may not be what I do full time, but it is what I'd like to be doing full time.

I remember seeing Imagine Me on IndieGames.com when you were still running the Kickstarter but I haven't

heard about it in a long time.

Chris: Yeah that's kind of the unfortunate thing is that everyone kind of had to get their life together and I had to get full time job after getting out of college and being an adult. Now that I have a full time job and I've paid off my school loans I can sit down and work on my game.

So it's not done yet?

Chris: No, it's not. That is another thing that has just taken so long to do. Like I said, just transitioning from being a college student to adult and that type of thing. Right now I am creating a level editor for the community so they can create their own levels, which is kind of cool. Once done I can release that to everyone and have them make their own levels and share them, then choose the best ones to include in the campaign.

Nice! How did you feel with the Kickstarter when you raised just \$256 over your \$5,000 goal?

Chris: Yeah, it was kind of weird. It went really smooth and I didn't really expect to make it at all. It's one of those things where once you get close the whole community is all like "Oh I'll pitch in a dollar" or "I'll pitch in \$5" then all the sudden you're



there. Once there is momentum, everyone kind of wants to hop on board. That was really nice. They gave me everything I needed to get rolling at the time so now it's just up to me to finish it.

What were some of the rewards that you are giving away?

Chris: T-shirts, stickers, just a bunch of different stuff. That's a side of Kickstarter that a lot of people don't see, is that the rewards take a ton of money. It was something that 40% of the rewards I sent out got lost in the mail or people said they didn't get them, which was annoying too. There's that whole side of Kickstarter that people ignore, like "oh they got the money, they started development yesterday!". It's not really like that. At the bottom there was an \$1,000 one where I'd call you or something ridiculous.

Did anybody choose it?

Chris: No, haha.

*To listen to the rest of the interview, please check out **Broadcast #39** of indie(Radio);! [\[Link\]](#)*

*Interview transcribed by the lovely **Danny Perksi**.*

DAYS AT THE NERDERY

305

COMPUTERS IN YOUR HOUSE

THREE

PROJECTS LAUNCHED

SIXTY-NINE

CERTIFICATIONS AND ACHIEVEMENTS



BLOGGING



GAMER



NETWORKING



OPEN SOURCE CONTRIBUTOR



WINDOWS USER



MAC FANBOY



TWITTER ADDICT



LINUX USER



SOCIAL NETWORKS



PUBLIC SPEAKING



RAMEN CHEF



ALL-NIGHTERS



ANDROID DEVELOPER

INTERVIEW WITH DAVID POUNTNEY AND WILLIAM TSOI FROM PATRONOID GAMES



Bret: With me is David and William from Paranoid Games. They're working on a game called Terrashift Tactics which was recently Kickstarted. How did that go?

David Pountney: It went pretty well. We asked for a tidy goal of 800 pounds. I'm not quite sure what that is in dollars, but yeah, we were successful and managed to get 1,058 pounds I think.

Oh wow!

David: So yeah! We're kind of in the small spectrum of indie, because this is kind of like a very small project with only a few, like a handful of indie developers. But yeah. We're chuffed that we managed to get that amount of money and that we get to make Terrashift Tactics the game that we want it to be.

So how many people are on your team in total?

David: I'd say roughly about five or six. It kind of changes because we offer a lot of freelance contract work, so basically we tend to pay people for like particular art assets, or like sound composing and stuff like that. So we have a lot of people who work for us and then they kind of go when they've done what they need to do. But the core team is mostly

just me, William and someone who isn't here today called Dan.

So what are your guys' roles?

David: I manage more of the business side of things, along with social networking. William here does a lot of work on the main programming of the game, along with a lot of stuff in networking as well. So that's the multiplayer side of things. Dan also programs.

What's been the hardest aspect of the game to implement so far?

William Tsoi: Ever since the last year I've been trying to get the engine to work because we've been writing our own engine for the game, so that in itself was quite challenging.

Yeah, writing your own engine is always a pain in the ass!

David: Yeah, we started off with a blank slate basically.

That's crazy...

David: Yeah, though it's been rewarding in a lot of sense. It allows us to do a lot of things that well, couldn't be done with other engines... do things our way in particular rather than theirs. But yeah, it does take a lot of time.

So I'm assuming that a lot of people listening today probably don't know what exactly Terrashift Tactics is, so could you give a little blurb on what it is?

David: Yeah, sure! Terrashift Tactics is a turn-based strategy game, with a big focus on online multiplayer. So uh Terrain and Structure and... I'm trying to think of an example. Those who've played Final Fantasy Tactics will be very familiar with this sort of game... nope sorry... wait yeah that's alright. Final Fantasy Tactics, except with a large focus on destroying the terrain and sort of like molding it to use tactically against your opponent.

William: There's also character customization and stuff as well. Like you get to choose out a bit of abilities for your character, to suit your own play style.

Sweet! I've always been a fan of the Final Fantasy Tactic games. Did you guys think that you were going to reach your goal when you started the Kickstarter?

William: Not right at the beginning, stuff was a bit slow like after the first couple of days.

David: Yeah, we got like 120 quid in the first day I think, which I mean sounds like a lot but over the course

of things, it quickly makes you go like "Ah!". Well that number's probably going to go down from then on.

Well I think indiegames.com posted something about you guys, which is probably how I found you... and that probably helped things.

David: Oh really? I wonder if I've seen that, actually.

*Don't quote me on that. *nervous laugh**

David: We found quite a few interesting websites that actually referenced us... a few forums actually. We were very quickly typing on there.

*I can hardly hear you type. Me on the other hand... *laugh**

David: *laughs*

So you guys have been developing the game... for how long now?

David: For roughly a year now.

How much longer do you think you guys will be working on it before it's released?

David: We have the beta planned to go live not long from now. The actual release date would be around February, that'd be of next year.

*Okay, February of next year. Yeah that's not too bad, that's... seven months away? Six. Seven. *laugh**

David: Hah, sounds like there's plenty of time.

It'll be here before we know it.

David: Yep. Yes it will.

*To listen to the rest of the interview, please check out **Broadcast #38** of indie(Radio);! [\[Link\]](#)*

*Interview transcribed by the fantastic **Taylor Whaley**.*

Photo of the Patronoid Games team



FIND OUT MORE ABOUT PATRONOID GAMES

Site: <http://www.patronoidgames.com>

Twitter: @PatronoidGames

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/PatronoidGames>

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT TERRASHIFT TACTICS

Page: <http://patronoidgames.com/games.html>

Back these games on Kickstarter and IndieGoGo!

Click Greenlight, IndieGoGo, and Kickstarter images to go the corresponding pages!



Fran Bow, an upcoming point and click adventure game, adds a sense of horror to the genre, telling the story of a little girl whose parents are murdered, and her mind afterwards. The duo, Killmonday (comprised of Natalia Figueroa and Isak Martinsson) has been working on the game for a while, and have the first of five chapters complete. Help them raise the \$20,000 they need to finish the game and survive to tell the tale!



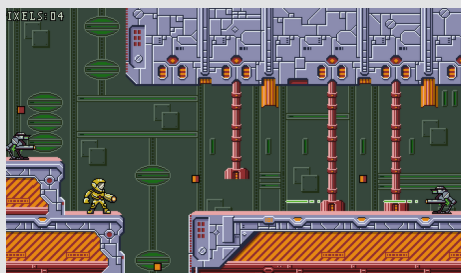
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BiT: Evolution is a “modern-retro platformer that pays homage to video gaming from the 1970’s and 80’s” that is currently being developed by a seven man team lead by James Booth. By swapping between dimensions, the player is able to explore a large world which evolves as the game goes on, having the graphics change from styles of Atari 2600 games all the way up to the fantastic 2D art of the Super Nintendo, allowing for the main character, “BiT”, to learn new abilities to explore even further.



KICKSTARTER

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Windows Download



Mac Download



Sword 'N' Board brings back the feeling of childhoods before technology - when the imagination was the most high tech toy you could have. Sword 'N' Board wants to bring back that feeling, through a game which has no tutorials, doesn't hold your hand, and only gives you a world begging your creativity to step into. Battle imaginary enemies as a kid named Sidd through cardboard forests and dark pillow fort dungeons, while solve challenging puzzles to help Sidd find the missing pieces to his video game console.

KICKSTARTER



KICKSTARTER

Bliss is a beautiful, beautiful world by Enlightened Games, in which the player explores a sacred and mystical land in need of healing. This adventure game features gorgeous puzzles throughout a massive land, with 7 hidden levels being planned in the final version. "Bliss is about walking towards the path of enlightenment or our truth. Shining light on the darkness, accepting who we are, and freeing ourselves from the shackles of unhealthy patterns." Try the demo out by visiting the Kickstarter page!

Have an upcoming Kickstarter/ IndieGoGo you'd like to see featured in Indie Power Magazine? Send an email to Bret@IndiePowerMag.com with information regarding the project and we'll make sure to put it in here! It is first come, first served, so if we get 5 or more games, we might not have space for them, so act fast!

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AS A WAY TO HELP GENERATE FUNDS FOR AN UPCOMING PROJECT, I'VE CREATED A BUNDLE SPECIAL FOR DONORS! I'VE WRAPPED ALL MY GAMES UP ALONG WITH SOME BONUS CONTENT.

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— BENN POWELL

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WHAT'S IN THIS DONOR BUNDLE?

14 GAMES

- 12 FLASH GAMES -

- 2 WINDOWS GAMES -

TWO BONUS VIDEOS

6 BONUS MP3 TRACKS

30 MINUTES OF DEVELOPER COMMENTARY

REVIEWS

Before we get into checking out some of the best games of the last month, we should probably see what exactly each rating means. Our scale's pretty similar to most rating scales, but it never hurts to take a peak at how exactly we grade each game.



10 - Masterpiece

These games are the indie gems. They show great innovation, are executed perfectly, and are games that you *have* to pick up.

9 - Exceptional

Nine's are almost what tens are, just they aren't quite there. They're still super entertaining, and provide hours upon hours of fun. They are those indie games that stick out, but don't always stick around. You should consider picking up one of these titles.

8 - Wonderful

This game is better than great, it's wonderful!

It possibly shows for some major potential, but doesn't quite achieve it. Otherwise it's a really fun game that isn't quite exceptional.

7 - Great

These games are better than most of the games, and are fun for a few playthroughs. They don't quite have what it takes to be wonderful.

6 - Good

Right above average! While these games are fun, they could use some more content, slightly better gameplay, or need an upgrade on visual/sound assets.

5 - Average

Eh, your game's alright, but just hardly stands out in the huge array of indie games available on the internet.

4 - Okay

We've seen better, and hope you'll keep working at it.

3 - Bad

Honestly, hitting the ESC button and watching the desktop come back was more fun than your game.



2 - Horrible

This game sucks pretty hardcore. Did you even put effort into this?

1 - Why would you even release this?

No. Just no.



Ratings 4 through 1 are pretty harsh, and we most likely won't be reviewing any games with that low of a rating. We won't even review 5's, because we want to let you know about the best indie games out there. And, well, here they are:



Shadowrun has a long history, dating back to its original release in 1989, brought to the world by FASA, lead by Jordan Weisman.

Jordan Weisman teamed up with Harebrained Schemes to create what the world now knows as Shadowrun Returns. From the original tabletop RPG to the recent video game, Shadowrun has ran a 24 year history, being revised four times and boasting half a dozen video games.

The latest iteration, Shadowrun Returns, allows new players as well as returning players (no pun

intended) to immerse themselves into the fascinating

world and gameplay Shadowrun has to offer. Shadowrun is where cyberpunk and fantasy meet, and craft a future Earth where magic is common, machines exist inside all humans, and technology has grown to exponential heights, allowing for new experiences, as well as items to aid people on their quests across Earth in the second half of the 21st century. Let's zoom in on 2054, which is when Shadowrun Returns takes place.





HADOWRUNTM

RETURNS

Review by Bret Hudson

DEVELOPER
Harebrained Schemes

PLATFORMS
Windows - Mac - Linux

GENRE
Tactical RPG

PRICE
\$19.99 / €18.99 / £14.99

RELEASE DATE
July 25

It's 2054 and you are notified on your computer that your old friend Sam had been killed. A datachip inside his head sends the message across the airwaves to your computer, where you open up the dreadful message. After wiping a few tears, it's time to head out and find Sam. His body is in tact, with his liver missing, and a strange doctor inspecting what's remaining. You decide to go out into the world to find some answers, whether or not it means returning to your runner roots.

Shadowrun Returns is the video

game equivalent of Shadowrun, a table top RPG, such as Dungeons and Dragons, returning to its roots while still having enough of a different taste to allow the idea to be developed into a standalone game. The Shadowrun universe has some special jargon and concepts, which thankfully don't have to be fully understood to jump into the game. For those players who need to understand everything, or those which haven't returned to the world in a while, a PDF with all information Shadowrun exists on Harebrained

Schemes' site.

A bit does need to be understood, however, which is quickly explained through the introduction to the first campaign, the Seattle Campaign (also known as "Dead Man's Switch"). Magic, a legend, reappeared to the world half a century prior to the events in Shadowrun, creating a multitude of changes across the world. Humans started to have offspring of subhuman species such as trolls, elves, and dwarves, and also began to integrate technology





right into their body, becoming practically cyborgs. Thanks to these advancements, the world has completely changed, in some ways great, in other ways terrible. One of our favorite examples of how the technology is being used in the game is through “Better Than Life” chips, or BTLs, which are a flash drive-esq drug that the user inserts into their brain to experience whatever memories and experiences are uploaded to the chip.

While creating your character, you have a handful of options to choose from, including race and class. Some classes excel in combat while others are good with computers or chatting with strangers. Deckers, for example, are exceptionally skilled with computers. No firewall or software can keep a decker out, allowing them access to not only data, but also to areas around the world that require access through electronic means. Sadly, the game doesn’t really give you much to base your race and class off of, resulting in the player making choices that they’ll regret later. It’s highly suggested you look into the

classes online before choosing one, because once you’ve chosen, you are set for the game, and lose the possibility of using another class’s special abilities. On top of that, each class has unique styles of battle, something that can be experienced throughout a playthrough of the campaign, as the game does add a great deal of members to your party throughout the journey.

It doesn’t stop there, however, players can even further customize their character’s skills during the game by spending karma points on upgrades to skills, using a system similar to Pixel Purge, with each upgrade costing one more than the upgrade before it. So, rank 4 shotgun would require the player to spend 4 karma to acquire. Firstly, they’d have to upgrade the skill above it in the tree to that level. The complex seems to discourage changing play styles and sticking with a similiar battle style throughout the adventure.

Earlier mentioned was tech, dubbed Cyberware and Bioware, being attached to humans, as well as nanotech implants. Players

are completely free to add these components to their character, however, without the option to ever remove them. Players are stuck with that tech, but are free to upgrade it.

Enough with how the game is set up. What about the quests? What about the action? What about that storyline that’s going on with your dead friend? We’ll get to these, just you hold your horses.

The player is sent on quests inside the isometric world, which both advance the story and earn karma for the player. Some quests are mandatory, while others are optional, giving the player extra karma and items. By clicking around the screen, the player can interact with items and NPCs, as well as get into some nasty fights.

Battles are much slower than the other Shadowrun video games that have appeared across the years, taking a turn-based system which requires the player to spend a set amount of AP on actions each turn for each character in their party. The current room quickly becomes a warzone, with walls and other objects

THE VERDICT

Innovation

Tabletop RPGs are getting dated, and the idea of capturing that experience in a video game is grand.

Execution

Aside from some annoying aspects of the conversion from tabletop to video game, Shadowrun Returns succeeds in capturing the experience of the original experience while still adding enough to make it a unique experience.

Gameplay

While battles get challenging, the interface is polished and refined to keep the dice rolling.

Graphics

Dazzling lights, intricate animations, and the attention to detail makes the world of Shadowrun Returns one you never want to leave.

Audio

Effectively reflects the player's situation, playing loops that refrain from driving you nuts.

Lifespan

Shadowrun Returns is going to be a game that's never going to die down, with no limits to the amount of content that the game will host in the future.

Overall

Shadowrun Returns brings returning players back and pulls in new fans through a truly marvelous game.

Score

9.5/10

becoming one of the player's main defenses against enemy fire. AP can be spent on a wide variety of actions, including attacking an enemy with a weapon, reloading a gun, casting magic, or simply moving to try to cut off the enemy's line of sight.

Attacking is as simple as making sure you have the right weapon equipped and loaded, followed by a click on the enemy you want to attack. Actually damaging them, though, relies on luck. Just like tabletop RPGs, you better hope chance is on your side, because behind the visuals of the game

is a dice sitting deep inside your computer, laughing when you get a bad roll.

While the player can heal all members of the party (and most likely the enemies if wanted), death is final, and there is no way to revive a fallen comrad. This might actually be possible with a mage class, but from what we experienced in our playthrough, a dead comrad is nothing more than a memory, and in some situations, a failed mission.

What we love most about this game is the world that exists inside this universe. It takes the best from cyberpunk and fantasy, throws them in a blender, and serves the mix in a gourmet cup. The story starts out as a simple quest to find your friend's dead body, and evolves into a much larger plot, brushing up against many of the different elements found inside the world of Shadowrun. Sam's body isn't the only that's been found with missing body parts, and the deaths have all been from a man or woman known as the Emerald City Ripper, a possible reference to The Ripper Crew cult of

the 1980's. Or it could just be a cool name for someone who rips body parts out of people. "The more you know", right?

On the journey, your character meets people close to the victims and collects information in an attempt to discover the identity of the person behind the attacks, teaming up with a couple of them.

The game does not allow for manual saving, which gets pretty annoying when you need to wrap up your current play session, but is present (well, not present) for a reason, and that's to make your decisions mean all the more. Between areas, the game autosaves itself before shoving the player into its destination. The player can always restart from the last checkpoint, but never save before the next. Never knowing how soon the next autosave was is almost as unpredictable as if your attacks will actually hit your enemies.

Shadowrun Returns itself does have more chapters planned, with the Berlin campaign planned to be released in October via DLC, with the price free to Kickstarter backers and undecided for everyone else. If you can't wait that long, or want even more to play, the game takes advantage of the Steam Workshop functions. Players can use a custom





editor built for the game to create their own campaigns, allowing for modifications to quests, NPC text, items, and even the world itself. What kind of tabletop RPG turned video game would be complete without a way to create and share your own adventures?

Even though the game's only been released for a few weeks,

there's already well over 150 user created campaigns, including a remake of the 1993 SNES version of Shadowrun. Another insane campaign being developed is by an 81 man team around the globe, lead by Opifer, which aims at being over 100 hours in length. There will most likely never be a lack of content for Shadowrun Returns.

Shadowrun Returns is already a phenomenal game with the current campaign, taking a total of 10-15 hours to complete. Hopefully the Berlin campaign will push the game further, and cover even more aspects of the Shadowrun universe, as the universe has given the game much potential to turn into an indie hit. ■





Guacamelee!

Guaca... Guacameh... Guacamelee? That some sort of vegetable? No, it's much greater than a vegetable (although those are muy bueno!) It's an adventure only worthy to true luchadors - the luchadors who are unafraid of death.

Guacamelee! Gold Edition is no walk in the park, but instead a quest across the vast Mexican lands, to the far reaches of the world of the dead. No mere average joe, like that Juan guy, would ever be able to succeed this journey, nor would they be able to take on Carlos Calaca. It would take so much more.

They'd have to train to become the most legendary of luchadors, mastering techniques from legend itself. It would take much strength, being able to harness the power of the goat as well as the frog! Nowhere would be impossible to reach, no enemy too tough, and no feat impossible. Their heart would have to be made of gold. El Presidente's daughter has been kidnapped, and she needs this warrior to save her. This masked hero. Are you ready?

AWAKEN YOUR TRUE SELF - AV

LU



WAKE THE INNER

JCHADOR!

DEVELOPER

Drinkbox Studios

PLATFORMS

Windows - PS3 - PSVita

GENRE

Action Platformer

PRICE

\$14.99 / €13.99 / £11.99

RELEASE DATE

August 8th (PC) - April 9th (PSN)

Guacamelee! lives up to just how amazing the name sounds. You participate in melee combat with... guaca awesomeness (whatever that means) unlike any other you've seen. At first glance, it looks just like every other action platformer, with brawler fights and intense platforming sequences, but it is much, much more.

The player takes up the role of Juan, an average joe kind of guy, who is an agave farmer in Mexico. His love, El Presidente's daughter, is taken by Carlos Calaca, a skeleton from "The Dead World," which is where Juan gets sent upon trying to save the girl. Inside The Dead World, Juan finds a luchador mask, which

enables him to become even stronger, and take on the quest to save El Presidente's daughter. At this point, a second player can join, doubling the guaca-action and melee ownage.

The Dead World takes a large role in the game, serving both as a key element in the story as well as a second dimension for the player(s) to swap between using portals, changing the layout of the room, closing and opening paths to different rooms and treasures. Some of the enemies in the game are "trapped" in one dimension, allowing them to attack you at all times, but only able to be hurt if the player is in the same dimension. Pretty cool, 'eh?

Throughout the journey, Juan and

his pal (if you're playing multiplayer) break an old man's statues, which hold mystical powers such as Goat Jump, Rooster Kick, and Olmec's Headbutt. These abilities expand Juan's fighting moves, which can be used in combos to inflict maximum damage. They have a second purpose, aiding the player by unlocking new areas that are blocked off by blocks that can only be destroyed with those moves. Most of the journey shows areas that are inaccessible, but with patience, the ability to enter these areas are revealed to Juan.

What **Guacamelee!** does really well is keeping the game fresh and the player on their toes. Each area boasts

new creatures to defeat, which require the player to use certain moves or movements to defeat, testing the player's patience and timing. It's what makes the melee system so great, is that it doesn't feel like any game out there. It's not a melee system, but a guaca-melee system! (Are the puns not punny anymore?)

Each mechanic in **Guacamelee!** is used in at least three different ways, and each new way is unpredictable, such as using the Rooster Kick as a double jump, or doing a dodge roll to move through prickly vines. The developers at DrinkBox Studios know what they're doing. Finding out a simple movement might be super effective in a combo with another

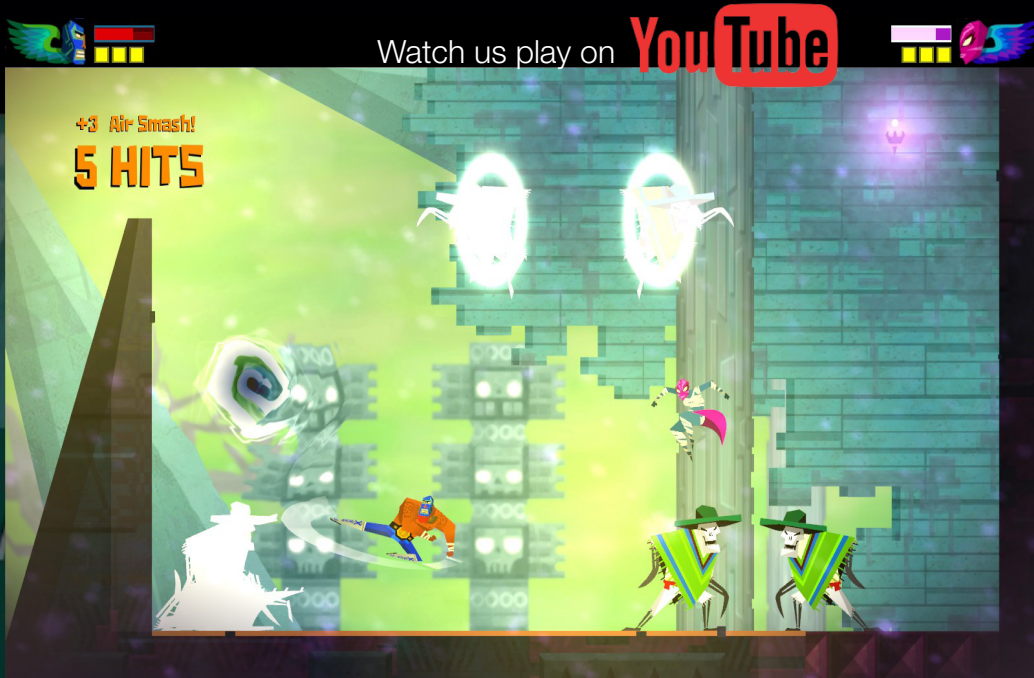
movement is an experience that does nothing short of bring joy.

It'd be an injustice to breeze over the visual aesthetics in the game. Unless you're blind (which would make it hard to read this magazine), you should be able to tell how great the game looks. Animations have a distinct style, and the best one by far is Juan's run. It's hard to say what about it makes it so great, but it just feels perfect. All the animations, fades, transitions, and lighting effects are far above average, and even exceed some of the best looking games out there. In fact, **Guacamelee!** was nominated for the Excellence in Visual Art at IGF 2013.

Every hit is multiplied by a

corresponding sound, and each special ability ripples through your skull as the speakers output an explosive burst. Combine that with the music unique to each environment, and you can practically close your eyes and imagine what's happening.

One of the coolest ideas shown in the game is using the dimensional shift to defeat enemies. One of the levels has skeletons that can throw bones through floors, which in turn hurt you. By changing dimensions, the floor below them disappears, bringing them to their doom in the river of lava below. Anyone who's watched Indie Game: The Movie knows it's important to reinvent how



Innovation

While the dimensional aspect of the game has been tried before, Guacamelee! takes it to the next level and does it in new ways never before seen in games.

Execution

Dimensional traveling built on top of a brawler/platforming experience takes skill to get right, and Guacamelee! far exceeds what we'd expect. Every part of the game feels polished to the point where it shines.

THE VERDICT

Gameplay

Other than having to hold the direction a split second before you do a special attack, the controls are firm and smooth, with a grand array of enemies to battle.

Graphics

Superb animations and graphics immediately separate Guacamelee from the rest of the market, and good thing too - a game this great needs to be easily seen from miles away.

Audio

A fantastic soundtrack to complement the game. It's exactly what you'd expect from a game about a luchador

traveling the lands of Mexico.

Lifespan

The game's a bit too short, but speedruns are happening, and is one of the highlights of the Gold Edition, meaning the game won't disappear from the public anytime soon.

Overall

Guacamelee! is an adventure meant to be experienced by all gamers, and we highly recommend playing it.

Score

9.5/10

mechanics in your game are used, and sections like the previous one are prime examples of Edmund's words.

What's this "Gold Edition" stuff? The biggest addition is the "El Infierno" level expansion, testing your might as a luchador in an insanely challenging platforming experience. Another huge addition is the Steam Workshop support, allowing users to create their own luchador costumes and share with other players. One of our favorites is shown to the right, created by Steam user "Crumpocalypse." Robotico Juan is not a version of Juan to mess with.



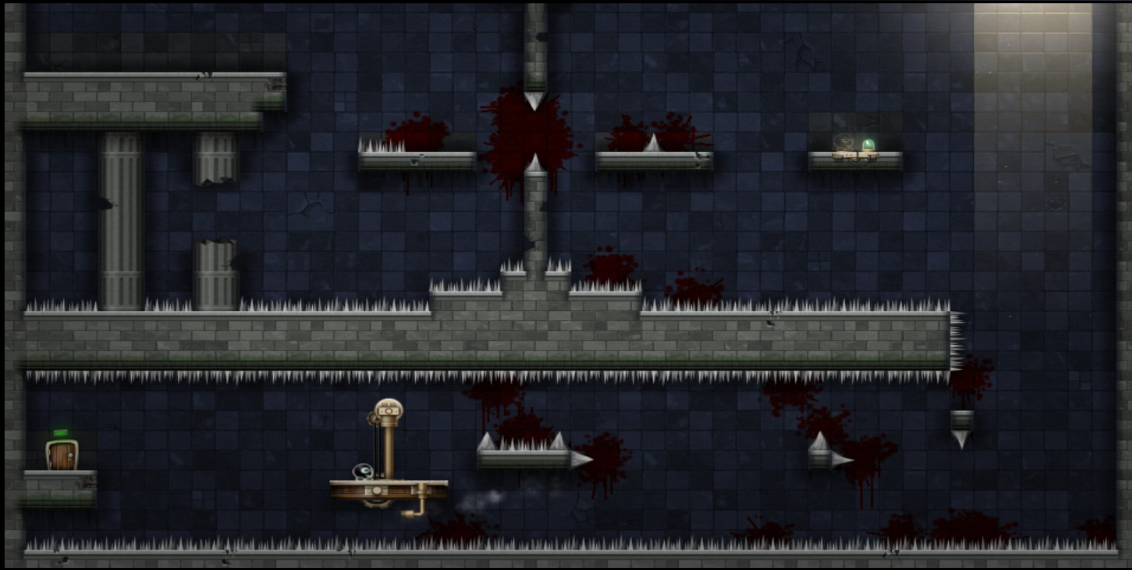
The game was a bit short, and it's Juan -we mean one- of the few games we're hoping for a sequel to. It's not too clear how they'd top the original, but if they could craft this game, it's certainly possible that they'd be able to create a sequel with enough new material to have us check it out.

Guacamelee! is an absolute must try. If you want to demo the game beforehand, head out to your local Target or Wal-Mart and grab the PS Vita system on display, as it'll most likely be installed onto the system. Or, go straight onto Steam and watch the magical Gold Edition shine in your game library.

Review by Bret Hudson

YOU STILL WON'T MAKE IT

Well, you certainly can try anyway



DEVELOPER

Vetra Games

PLATFORMS

Windows - Mac

GENRE

Platformer

PRICE

\$4.99 / €3.84 / £3.28

RELEASE DATE

July 30

Jesse Venbrux has given the world a taste of challenging platformers, each better than the last. **You Probably Won't Make It** is easily one of the most memorable, with a unique visual effect emulating that of old, slow Windows 95 computers. Remember when you'd drag a window and it'd leave a trail behind? That's exactly what would happen upon moving.

While **You Still Won't Make It** doesn't keep this style, it still has enough flare to make it stand out. Unlike the original, **YSWMI** was developed by a team (Vetra Games), which consists of Jesse, Uriel Griffin, Jake Almond, and Martin Crownover. With the game's background out of the way, let's talk about the journey of not making it.

You Still Won't Make It prompts the player to "Try Anyway" on the menu, which brings the player to a world selection

screen. Only three worlds are currently available, with more on their way. Don't get us wrong - there's already plenty of content in the worlds, housing 50 soul crushing levels with increasingly difficult jumps and hallways. While some levels are a breeze, eventually there will be a point where the player realizes that they just don't have what it takes to make it.

The physics in the game take a bit of adjusting to get used to. Jumping works just like every other game,

but once you reach the peak of your jump, you're in for a ride, as the main character (we're gonna call him Jumpie) is super aerodynamic. Falling happens super fast, and a terminal velocity all but exists. Double jumping halts all downwards velocity, which doesn't make too much sense, but neither does double jumping itself. Moving left and right works just like any other platformer, with minimal sliding after movement.

Timing jumps is where most of the



challenge is found, forcing the player to navigate little Jumpie through small gaps only possible to get through via double jumping. Learning how the player moves takes practice, and death after death will occur. Every time you die, the wall gets stained with blood, reminding you time and time again of just how terrible you are at this game. Certain parts of World 3 may leave the player questioning the sanity of the developers, after leaving a level with more red than blue on the walls.

One of the downfalls of the game is it introduces new mechanics occasionally, each with tons of potential, but refuses to re-implement the mechanic in later levels. Saw blades are super fun to avoid, but are sparse. Even more rare are floors that hold a spike that pops out on a timer. This mechanic seems to only show up in one level, which is a bit disappointing. Hopefully these elements, along with others that hardly saw the light of day, will have a larger role in Worlds 4 and 5 in the future updates to the game.

You Still Won't Make It's audio system is a concept that's far from new but rarely used in 2D games. Fans are merely background noise (if you can even hear them at all) from a distance, but jumping right over one will blow sound out your speakers,

Innovation

Doesn't reinvent the wheel, but instead adds alternate physics to the experience, testing the player's ability to adapt as well as their ability to time jumps perfectly.

Execution

Keyboard breaking difficulty: check.
Still fun: check.
Vetra Games has crafted a fantastic platformer.

Gameplay

Redundant and puzzling (pun intended) at times, you get into the flow of how the game wants you to play and it provides a slow but interesting story.

Graphics

Fun blood splatters, a non-repetitive background and eye pleasing visuals keep you sane after dying so many times it exceeds the number of pixels on your screen.

Audio

While the music's pretty cool, what really makes the audio a part of the adventure is how Vetra Games incorporated a sound distance system. A saw blade will hardly make a noise - unless you're next to it. The sound will send a ripple down your spine.

Lifespan

Just like *Super Meat Boy*, *You Still Won't Make It* will bring you coming back for more when you're up for the challenge. The game won't easily get stale.

Score

8.5/10

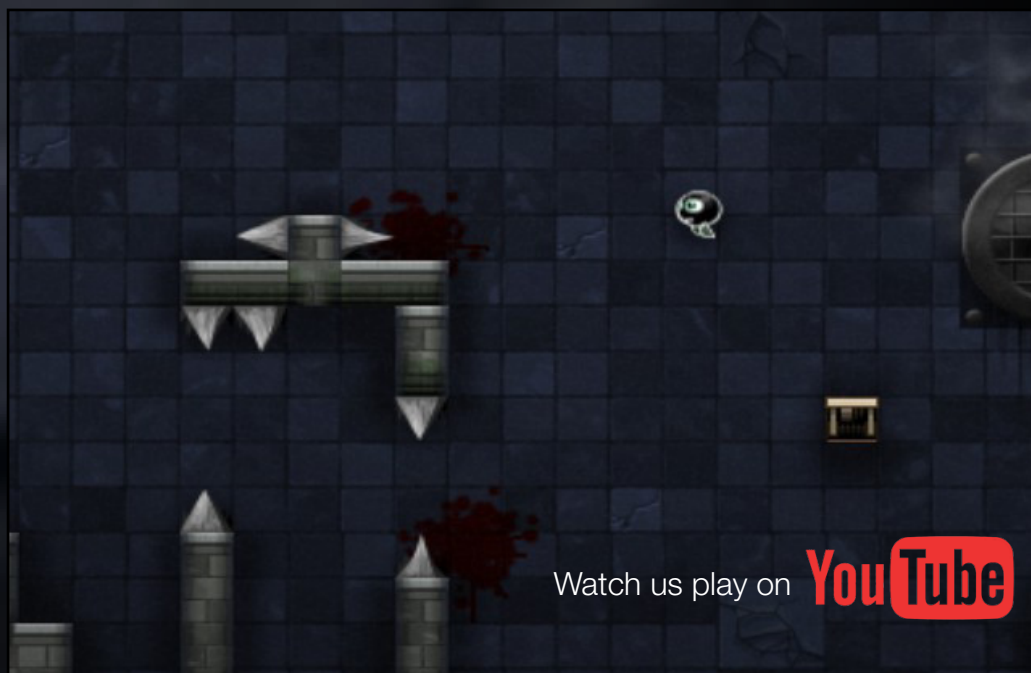
letting you know that fan is nearby. Many elements of the game have a looping sound that is only noticeable if you're brave enough to approach it.



A must by for any lover of difficult platformers, or any lover of Jesse Venbrux's work (or any lover of Jesse Venbrux himself), *You Still Won't Make It* will push you to your limits, rewarding the player upon success with even more treacherous levels. There's always one more pixel perfect jump, one more saw blade to dodge. It really doesn't matter how hard you try, though, because there's only one way to win in the end, as shown below, because *You Still Won't Make It*.

Quit

Review by Bret Hudson



Watch us play on **YouTube**

FACE NOIR

Do you believe in Destiny?

Price

\$19.99/€19.99/£16.99

Platforms

PC, Mac, iPad

Genre

Adventure

Developer

Mad Orange

Localization

Phoenix Online Studios

Release Date

July 18, 2013 (English)

December 21, 2012 (Italian)

July 31, 2012 (German)

Innovation

The introduction of new puzzle mechanics to challenge and engage the player was a smart move.

Execution

Interesting tactics to make the game more innovative are mildly overshadowed by a lack of conveyance in game play and tools provided.

Gameplay

Redundant and puzzling (pun intended) at times, you get into the flow of how the game wants you to play and it provides a slow but interesting story.

Graphics

The animation is slow and chopping at some points and there is a lack of pacing with character movement.

Audio

The background noise isn't policed enough and if it wasn't for the subtitles in the dialogue, there would be chunks of monologues that go unheard over the rumbling of trains, the constant spritzing of rain or the sudden crashes of lightning.

Lifespan

Like most adventure games, it's a one and done. You can't really replay the game the same way but it is a game that would be great to share with friends and family, if you don't mind lending out your computer to do it.

Score

6/10



The combination of an adventure game akin to *Myst* and the setting of 1920's film noir style detective drama had me chomping at the bit to work my way through **Face Noir**. The uniqueness of the setting, set in a familiar and normally romanticised era had my interest piqued. Unfortunately, the very first scene left me with a bitter taste in my mouth with its choppy animation and forced dialogue. It never really got better. The whole time, I felt like I was playing an older game whose story didn't get the attention it needed.

However, I was pleased to find that the story's beginning was not a stark indicator of the game to come. You are introduced to the main character, a cynical alcoholic former detective, Jack Del Nero, with a penchant for Italian cursing and Whiskey. He isn't exactly a lovable character, with his aggressive apathetic behavior towards himself, mixed with a condescending attitude to others, and there is little to encourage you to want to help him. He's a bit depressing but as you learn more about him, his personality seems a bit apropos though still grating. There is also a

necessity to recite what sounds like lines pulled from a history book to fuel the setting's backstory for anyone who is unfamiliar with the jazz, prohibition and Great Depression era. While I appreciate the infusion of education, it always feels out of place when he is explaining his surroundings, similar to the know-it-all kid at the front of class bursting with factoids.

What the game may lack in character construction and awkward dialogue, it makes up for with its innovative approach to puzzles. Like most adventure games you are forced to explore every nook and cranny of a scene, before you can complete a section, discovering information that you then use to explore other spaces and speak with witnesses and suspect. It is not just a puzzle within the game but within your own logic as you are challenged in mechanics like the "Can you use your head?" and "You're in control now" which give you both an opportunity to use your critical thinking skills with context clues and providing you with a false control mentality that is ultimately guided by the game.



Unfortunately, there is an annoying lack of conveyance in regard to all of the options and abilities you have when investigating (ie, no mention of the task bar that holds all of the items you collect). You are not handed information and conclusion once you've successfully clicked on each button but like all puzzle games, there is only one way to complete each part and in a particular order it seems. You have to discover and hold objects in a specific order, with no guidance from the main character outside of some poorly scripted hints that become infuriatingly repetitive. This stress on sequential selection is jarring and not

who isn't well seasoned in the art of the puzzle adventure game.

Once I discovered the hidden toolbar, which I think should be visible at all times, and how to view which hints are available, shown through bright orange markers (once selected from an additional hidden button, the game was easier to navigate and became more enjoyable. Most of the characters reacted roughly and negatively to the main character and you stand perched on a thin line, wanting to discover the ending but also not having an enthusiastic will to help the character win.

Thankfully, the art style was

everyone notices the same objects in the same order. Also, the game is set in a default that isn't the Detective 3D, which you seem to need to locate certain objects. These little moments that you wouldn't normally expect to discover on your own, along with the dual purpose of your left and right sides of the mouse, can turn off a player

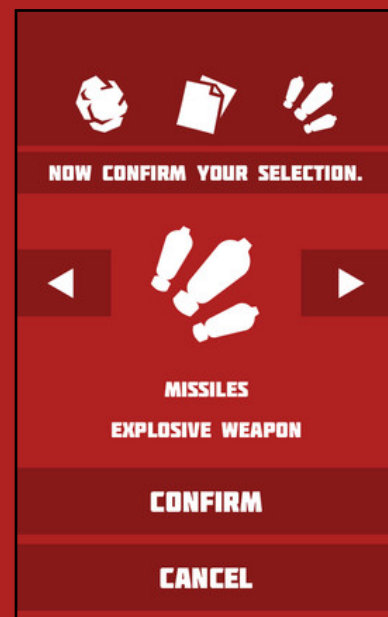
enjoyable. It has a good collection of beautiful still art pieces in a clever watercolor style mixed with police courtroom sketches. The detail placed in the visuals forces you to not take the background for granted as even the smallest corner or alley can be the difference between a break in the case or being forced to sit idly by while Del Nero tells you he isn't going to leave without completing his objective, a frustrating reminder that you've missed something.

All in all, while the game does have its hang ups and awkward stumblings, it is a game to be enjoyed by someone with the patience and love of puzzles. Its a one shot, though repeating it would no longer be tedious, the challenge and mystery disappears too. While the games strives to branch out and try new mechanics for an adventure game, it also decides to commit many of its predecessors' sins, largely a lack of conveyance or necessary preliminary information about what tools are being provided, flooding the player with too many options and no guidance whatsoever. Even when I'm lost and confused, I should still know what I have in my pockets. ■

Review by Britny Musson

ROCK PAPER MISSILES

Price \$2.99/€2.25/£1.99 Platforms iOS Genre Strategy



Innovation

Adds a new and humorous way to replay a classic.

Execution

Beautifully executed, allowing for the player to learn from their mistakes but still have to be smart about their decisions.

Gameplay

Smooth and simple. Click buttons to navigate through menus and game screens.

Graphics

Very simple, but also very engaging.

Audio

Soothing music complements the game.

Lifespan

While not a hardcore game, still has enough content to bring you back time and time again.

Overall

A fresh experience that's guaranteed to bring a smile to your face.

Score
7.0/10

Every child's played Rock Paper Scissors, but many have never heard of the legend of Rock Paper Missiles, the true way to play the classic game. Why settle with three weapons when you have an array of over 20 at your disposal? Defeat a devastating dragon with a flash bang, or deflect a spear with a

mere rock. There's no limit to the

fun, with combinations never before seen. I mean, how often do you see scarecrows taking missiles without getting a scratch?

The game begins with you choosing three weapons from the seven weapon types, each having three strengths and three weaknesses. Once you've selected your three weapons, the next screen shows your opponent's choices. Choosing which of the three you want to use will battle one of the enemy's three choices, resulting in life or death. Upon winning or having a tie, you earn points to level up, which each even numbered level unlocking new weapons, from phoenixes to grenades, from katanas to flamethrowers.

Danny Perski is known for making games that are outside the box, and this is no exception, building off of the core idea of the

PAPER MISSILES

Category **Developer** Danny Perski **Release Date** July 25



original Rock Paper Scissors and molding it into an original experience played with an iOS.

Not only is this game single player, but also has a local multiplayer function for you to battle your friends, allowing for you to get even more bang for your buck. The three color style of the game is unique, and looks phenomenal, using non-animated graphics and smooth transitions to keep the experience even simpler. If you're looking for big explosions and particle effects, you're looking at the wrong game.

The game doesn't feel too repetitive, and has new unlockable weapons once you've won enough rounds, adding a new layer of strategy as you go on, allowing the game to evolve as well as your play style. While the weapon selection menu doesn't let you know that weapon's weaknesses and

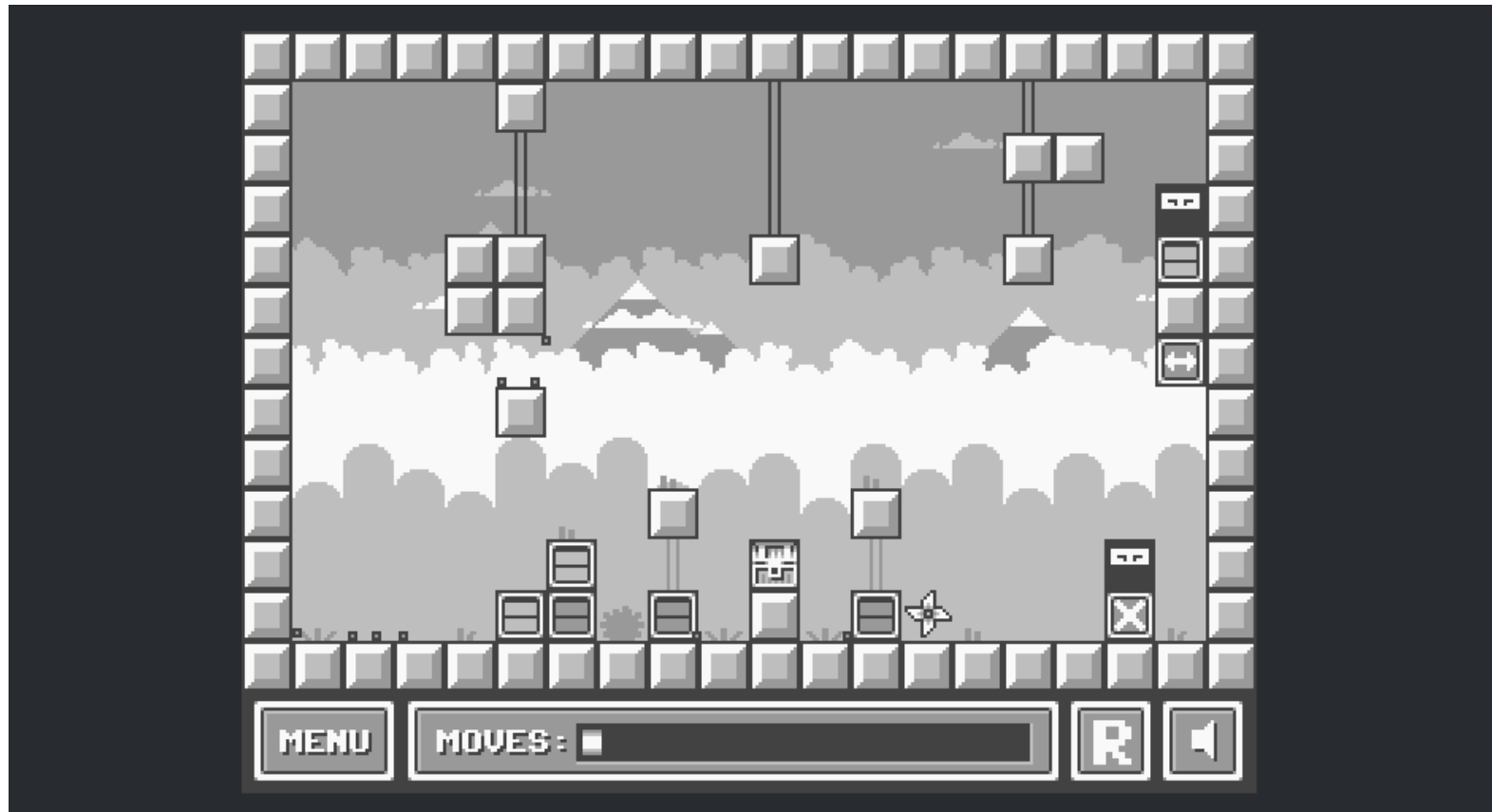
strengths, they are available in the help menu, which is easily accessible for refreshing you on the way of the trade. New updates to the game come out occasionally, adding onto the already huge selection of weapons. Check out Rock Paper Missiles, and whatever you do, don't choose scissors.

Review by Bret Hudson



NINJA TWINS

Double the ninjutsu!



Price Free Platforms Flash Genre Puzzle Developer Metanet Software Release Date May 17

Innovation

Allows the player to control two characters at the same time

Execution

The game features 30 challenging and very well designed levels around this mechanic.

Gameplay

Some parts feel a bit unpolished, but the game works as intended.

Graphics

Takes using only five shades of grey very far, using parallax backgrounds to give the world life and depth.

Audio

Sounds effects are humorous, but quickly get repetitive along with the music.

Lifespan

Will keep the player entertained for hours, but is unlikely to bring them back for another playthrough.

Score
7.0/10

Ninja Twins is a puzzle game in which the player has control of two ninjas simultaneously, able to have them jump around the map in perfectly horizontal and vertical movements, only stopping once they've hit a wall. The duo are able to manipulate the environment to help each other, but also are a nuisance from time to time, jumping right into hazards or moving something back out of place while the other ninja is moving closer to the chest at the end of the puzzle.

The idea of controlling two characters is genius (and has been done before), but not quite like this. Both ninjas react to the same player input, and this simple concept gives birth to more puzzles than you can imagine. The game gradually introduces new mechanics without overwhelming the player, easing them through the journey and teaching them about how to be the best ninja possible. Pushable crates, hazards, breakable blocks, and teleporters are just a handful of the crazy elements that the ninja duo

must use and overcome.

With some more levels, **Ninja Twins** could easily become a mobile game that would be worth a few dollars. Considering the levels are so difficult, it might not even need any more, and all that would be needed is a touch-friendly way of input. I know I'd download it!

Ninja Twins thoroughly tests the player's mental strength, which is a true test for any ninja. I'm still working through level 11, and wonder if the claim that only Chuck Norris has beaten all the levels is true. Whether or not that means Chuck Norris is a ninja, Kronbits should stick with making puzzle games, because my mind has been bent in ways I didn't know were possible. ■

Review by Bret Hudson

THIS IS THE END OF THE MAGAZINE, FOLKS!

We hope you enjoyed this issue of Indie Power Magazine, and come back again next issue for even more. Send in your opinions and feedback to us by commenting on the post where you heard about us, or by sending us a personal email at feedback@indiepowermag.com.

